

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF NORDIC BOLOGNA EXPERTS

COPENHAGEN 12. -13. 01. 2009

Participants:

Denmark:

Arne Kjær
Ole Faaborg
Dorte Salskov Iversen
Stinna Gammelgaard
Christiane Mißlbeck-Winberg

Finland:

Maija Airas (13.01)
Juuso Leivonen (12.01)

Iceland:

Sigurdur Kari Arnason
Gisli Fannberg

Norway:

Etelka Tamminen Dahl
George Francis
Frank Moe

Sweden:

Anders Ahlstrand
Jonerik Lundquist

What is new since the last meeting? Round the table:

Denmark: Not too much has happened since Helsinki. The focus of the Danish Bologna Experts Group has been on mobility. Denmark has a rather strong imbalance between incoming and outgoing students. This may of course be seen as a proof of internal quality: Foreign students want to come, and Danish students do not want to leave (see also presentation by Christiane later).

There have been many mergers between Danish HEIs, in particular within the “erhvervsakademi”-sector and the University College sector (Professionshøjskoler). Due to a number of incidents, there are now initiatives towards constructing a “code of conduct” for Danish HEIs, but will so far not be implemented.

Norway: Norway also has an imbalance with regard to mobility flows. But we should not only look at the total figures, because these may cover other imbalances, for instance with regard to disciplines or institutions. Norwegian institutions have seen many changes in structure and regulations over the last few years, and there seems to be a certain fatigue among both faculty and administrative staff, which may cause them to be less

enthusiastic with regard to promoting mobility. The Norwegian Qualifications Framework is due in a few weeks' time. A White Paper on Internationalization is also due soon.

We can also sense a growing interest in rankings and benchmarking among Norwegian institutions. Although most rankings are officially discarded as being not very relevant and biased to the disadvantage of Norwegian (and Nordic?) institutions one has to accept that they are there and that many look to them for some kind of guidance.

Iceland: The Qualifications Framework which was introduced in 2006 will be reviewed in light of the experience. This is a planned review and modifications rather than great changes are expected.

Finland: The Stocktaking Report for Finland is now on the web. Cimo has arranged some ECTS/DS Label seminars with an attendance of 60-70 people. Work on the National Qualifications Framework is ongoing, as is work on guidelines for recognition of prior learning. These guidelines should be based on Learning Outcomes.

A new University Act is being prepared. This will cause fairly big changes for the institutions. Among the changes are:

- Increased external representation on the board
- Rector will be elected/appointed by the board
- Greater independence/autonomy (but also greater self responsibility, for instance with regard to financing).

A strategy for internationalization is on the way. This will focus particularly on mobility matters.

There will be a pilot project 2010-2013 where the institutions may charge tuition fees from third country students.

Sweden: Has only run one external seminar in 2008. Plans for 2009 include one seminar for academics and one directed at employers. A National Qualifications Framework is on the way. There is already a framework for higher education. An act on internationalization is being prepared. This will open up the possibility for institutions to offer joint degrees.

Sweden will also allow for tuition fees for third country students (from 2010). Assuming that this (at least initially) will lead to a drop in interest from third country students, one foresees a need for greater marketing efforts directed at these markets.

The Danish educational system (Christiane Mißbeck-Winberg): See presentation slides)

ECTS/DS Labels: (All)

Denmark: Not much interest. Ciriis invited to an info meeting, but only four institutions were present. Not many label applications are expected. (As of January 15, CIRIUS has received 1 DS Label application and 1 ECTS Label application)

Norway: Fairly good interest, but a number of institutions have reported that to go for an ECTS Label now would imply too much work and they are not quite ready yet. However, they expect to be able to apply at some later stage. 2-3 applications are expected. Interest in DS Label has been quite good as this is far less demanding and work consuming. At least 20 applications are expected. SIU held a seminar which attracted 8 institutions. A clear response from many institutions has been that the work with application has been advantageous with regard to internal quality assurance. (As of January 19, Norway had 2 ECTS Label applications and 26 DS Label applications)

Iceland: Does not participate this time (along with France). But there is a certain interest, and the decision not to participate is not shared by all. Iceland will probably participate next time.

Finland: Held one seminar with about 60 participants, but does not expect very many applications.

Sweden: Held one seminar with 12-14 institutions present. Expects 4-5 ECTS Label and an unknown number of DS Label applications.

There was a general consensus in the group that the initiative cannot now be called off, even if this year's applications round should not be a huge success. Some institutions ask "What's in it for us?". A label may be used in external marketing, but also in the internal quality process.

Presentation of an institution and their implementation of the Bologna elements:

(Dorte Salskov Iversen) See Powerpoint presentation

Lifelong learning – recognition of non formal learning: (Frank Moe) See Powerpoint presentation.

Mobility trends: (Christiane Mißbeck-Winberg/Anders Ahlstedt) See also PP presentations.

The introduction of tuition fees has so far not had a profound effect on the total number of 3rd country students, but has changed the composition of the incoming student group to some extent. The trend towards imbalance has become very evident from 2003 onwards. While the number of incoming students has increased steadily, the number of outgoing students has shown a small decrease.

One of the possible reasons mentioned (from Ålborg) was that their students (confirmed by others) were now older when starting their studies largely due to their working, travelling, buying a flat etc. before starting their studies. Starting age is around 23 as an average. On the positive side this also gives them some life experience which is an advantage with regard to their studies.

A Swedish survey shows the same tendency: See:

http://www.programkontoret.se/Global/material/rapporter/att_vardera_internationell_erfa_renhet.pdf

Surveys also show a great inconsistency between the number of respondents who say that they want to go abroad and how many actually do.

Danish Bologna experts have the promotion of outgoing mobility as an important action. Cirijs has also made a survey concerning the perceived benefits of mobility. In 2009 there will be a survey looking at barriers to mobility and an employer study, and there will be a campaign for outgoing mobility.

The following is a Norwegian study concerning the effects of a mobility period on employability and salary:

http://www.nifustep.no/norsk/publikasjoner/studiemobilitet_og_arbeidsmarkedstilpasning

Some comments from the discussion:

- Too little continuity in the organizations leading to lower competence with regard to counseling.
- Many faculty staff seem to be profoundly anti-international (and not just older ones)
- The study programs must be better tailored to incorporate a study period abroad.
- Faculty staff **MUST** be actively involved
- Mobility work must have active support from the top leadership of the institution.

Bologna and Doctoral programmes: (Etelka Dahl) (See also presentation)

A question of definition: Is there a difference between “joint doctoral programme” an “Co-tutelle”? Doctoral programmes are expensive, and one needs to look for other means of finance, even Erasmus (even though this is not very substantial)

Doctoral programmes vary, and so do the requirements, for instance one year Masters. Some have tried to squeeze in 90 credits for one year (totally rejected by the Norwegian Ministry)

The typical doctoral programme in Norway and Denmark is 3 years, with a “course part” of 30 credits. In Sweden the course part comprises 50%(!). It is still possible to have “Open/Independent” degrees, that is without formal courses. Also possible to obtain a free degree, that is to be tried for the doctorate without a formal training period (Dr philos)

Who can sit in the evaluation committee? The tutor may not. The general requirement is that all members must themselves have a doctoral degree. In Sweden it is possible to include others as well, without this formal competence, but the commission must then comprise 5 persons.

In Norway the candidate must give 3 lectures, one in a given subject (broadly within the area of his/her doctorate thesis), one of his/her own choosing, and then finally one introducing his/her own work at the start of the thesis defense.

Bologna after 2010: (Ole Faaborg) (Se also presentation)

Viewed historically most European countries are not very old, and the same goes for the institutions – must be open to change.

Some points from the discussion:

Modernisation must not imply unification, but a transparent diversity.

Modernisation is particularly important with regard to management, but also curricula.

We need to look at what kind of education ~~the~~ society needs.

How can we handle a growing student population? By lowering the standards? The universities no longer handle only the elite few, but more or less the broad masses who may not have the same intellectual prerequisites for studying. To get these through the system we must either lower the academic standards or put in more resources.

New ways of looking at desired qualifications.

There is an inflexibility of delivery which makes it difficult for many groups to utilize the system, e.g. trade unions.

The Bologna Process is facilitating networking and partnerships. BC is primarily facilitating individual mobility, not so much for institutions. Erasmus Mundus is an example that stems from the Bologna Process, and which changes national structures and legislation. The market is an important driver behind many of the processes. Some of the changes might still have happened, but in a slower and less structured way.

Ideas for future cooperation: (Frank Moe)

A paper with a number of possible projects had been sent out to the participants. All participants wanted to continue the cooperation in some form, but future projects need to be more externally focused, even though the internal discussions and knowledge sharing is very useful. Frank Moe will present 2 separate project ideas for the next top-up application. One of these should in part continue the fruitful internal discussions, but be coupled with external activities. We should aim at producing something “physical”, e.g. guidelines, recommendations, “handbook” or maybe a larger seminar, conference etc.

The next application will probably be for a two year period, and we should in any case plan for a longer period than one year.

Some ideas for topics: Mobility, Learning Outcomes, PhD, Nordic ranking system, short cycle programs (e.g. market oriented programs that could be developed and delivered more quickly)